

Message Text

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12

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R 262030Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7433

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L T E G U C I G A L P A 2 6 6 7

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, HO

SUBJECT: TEACHERS' STRIKE

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION HAVE BEEN CARRYING OUT A SERIES OF PARTIAL STRIKES IN VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS. THEY ARE DEMANDING A 50 PERCENT INCREASE IN SALARIES WHILE THE GOVERNMENT HAS INSISTED THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES IN 1974 TO MEET THEIR DEMANDS. UNLESS THERE IS A COMPROMISE ON THE PART OF BOTH SIDES THE PRESENT SITUATION COULD DEGENERATE INTO A PARALYZATION OF THE ENTIRE SCHOOL SYSTEM. END SUMMARY.

1. POLOFFS SPOKE TO MINISTER OF EDUCATION NAPOLEON ALCERRO ON JUNE 25 CONCERNING A DEVELOPING TEACHERS' STRIKE. THE FOUR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS HAVE BEEN REQUESTING AN INCREASE OF 50 PERCENT IN THEIR SALARIES AND PRESENTED THEIR REQUESTS TO THE MINISTERS OF FINANCE AND EDUCATION DAXING THE PAST MONTH. THE GOH HAS REFUSED TO CONSIDER A SALARY INCREASE DURING 1974 BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMS IT DOES NOT HAVE NECESSARY FINANCIAL

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RESOURCES.

2. THE GOH STATED THAT IT WOULD INITIATE A STUDY TO
CONSIDER THE SALARY LEVELS OF ALL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.
HOWEVER, THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUCH A STUDY COULD ONLY
BECOME EFFECTIVE DURING 1975. THE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS
REFUSED TO ACCEPT SUCH A COMPROMISE BECAUSE, IN THEIR VIEW,
THE INFLATIONARY SPIRAL IS SO SERIOUS THAT THEY ARE IN
IMMEDIATE NEED OF AN INCREASE. AS A RESULT A PROGRESSIVE
STRIKE OF TEACHERS STARTED IN VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS ON
JUNE 25.

3. MINISTER ALCERRO SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD GONE TO
EXHAUSTIVE LENGTHS TO PROVE TO THE TEACHERS THAT NO FUNDS
WERE AVAILABLE FOR A 1974 INCREASE, BUT THAT THEY HAD
REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPLANATIONS. HE SAID
THAT AN EVENTUAL CLOSURE OF THE ENTIRE SCHOOL SYSTEM IS
POSSIBLE IF THE TEACHERS DO NOT ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT'S
POSITION IN REGARD TO SALARIES. HE REMARKED THAT THE
STRIKE AT BASE IS POLITICAL RATHER THAN ECONOMIC. HE
COMMENTED THAT HE HAD NO PROOF BUT BELIEVED THAT THE
SOVIET LINE COMMUNISTS ON THE ONE HAND AND THE NATIONALIST
PARTY ON THE OTHER ARE URGING THE TEACHERS TO STRIKE IN
HOPES OF EMBARRASSING THE GOVERNMENT.

4. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF THE
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS POLOFFS WERE TOLD THAT THE TEACHERS
ARE DETERMINED TO OBTAIN SALARY INCREASES IN 1974. THEY
DENIED ANY POLITICAL INTEREST ON THEIR PART AND EMPHASIZED
THAT IT IS PURELY A QUESTION OF ECONOMIC NEED. THEY
COMMENTED THAT A CLOSURE OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IS A
DEFINITE POSSIBILITY IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT CHANGE
ITS POSITION.

5. COMMENT: THE POSITIONS OF GOH AND THE TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATIONS SEEM TO BE DAMETRICALLY OPPOSED AT THIS
STAGE. UNLESS THERE IS SOME COMPROMISE ON THE PART OF
BOTH SIDES IT APPEARS THAT A CONFRONTATION IS INEVITABLE.
SUCH A SITUATION COULD WELL LEAD TO A STATE OF CONTINUING
TENSION THAT COULD BE UTILIZED BY THE OPPOSITION TO CRITICIZE
THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE QUESTION.

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